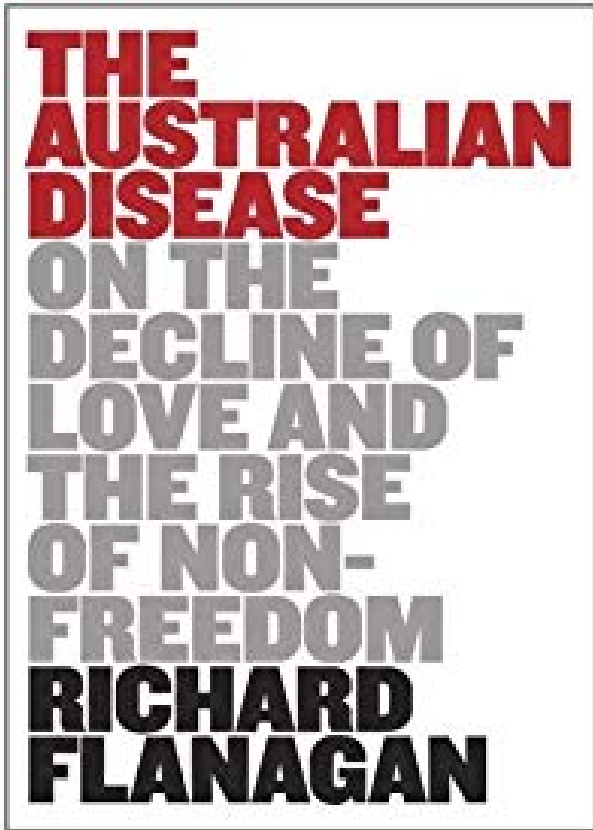


The Australian Disease: On the Decline of Love and the Rise of Non-freedom



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Richard Flanagan's closing address to the 2011 Melbourne Writers' Festival struck a chord around Australia. This stirring speech has been broadcast nationally on radio and television and published in Quarterly Essay 44. At a moment when the ferment of Tahrir Square has spread around the world to unsettle the status quo, Flanagan's provocative ideas resonate with a new mood and a new questioning. Above all, Flanagan says, we need to take our compass more from ourselves and from the powerful if we are to find hope.

"We need to look the disease of Australia in the eye, the disease of conformity that is ill preparing us for the future. Does Australia still have the courage and largeness it once had when it pioneered the secret ballot and universal suffrage? Or will it simply become the United Arab Emirates of the West, content to roll on for a decade or two more glossing over its fundamental problems while brown coal and fracked gas keep the country afloat?" – Richard Flanagan